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ABSTRACT

This study reviews the literature on the supervisory conference over the past 30 years in order to examine the underlying assumptions about conferences and how they have been incorporated and interpreted by those who have written about supervisory conferences. The review is organized according to the three major components of the conference: the perceived purpose, the relationship between the teacher and the supervisor in the conference situation, and the way in which information and data about the teacher's performance are used during the conference. The permutations within each of these components reveal significant differences in the ways in which the conference is conceived and conducted. Examining these differences allows the variations in underlying assumptions about conferences to surface. Extensive references are supplied. (TE)

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IMPLICIT ASSUMPTIONS ABOUT THE SUPERVISORY CONFERENCE: A REVIEW AND ANALYSIS OF LITERATURE

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In 1955 Burton and Breukner heralded the age of modern supervision which involved :

> the systematic study and analysis of the entire teaching-learning situation utilizing a carefully planned program that has been cooperatively derived from the situation and which is adapted to the needs of those involved in it." (Burton and Breukner, 1955, p.13)

Since that time, the routine practice of direct supervision has assumed a pattern reflecting the activities described by Burton and Breukner, a pattern in which a supervisor observes a teacher teach and then holds a conference with him to discuss the classroom experience that has been observed. The conference is assumed to provide the appropriate context within which to consider the data provided by the observation of classroom teaching, and to offer the supervisor and teacher the best opportunity to plan ways that the teacher might improve instruction and learning in her classroom.

This study provides a review of the literature on the supervisory conference over the past thirty years. As presented in this paper the literature review on conferencing is not intended to be comprehensive. Rather, it is to provide a basis for the paper's primary purpose which is a look at underlying assumptions about conferencing and how they have been incorporated and interpreted by those who have studied and written about supervisory conferencing.

COMPONENTS OF THE CONFERENCE

For purposes of organization, three major components of the conference can be identified in the literature. They are: the

perceived purpose of the conference, the relationship between the teacher and the supervisor in the conference situation, and the way in which information and data about the teacher's performance are used during the conference. While the components themselves are common to the supervisory conference, the permutations within each component reveal notable differences in the ways in which the conference is conceived and conducted. Examining these differences allows the variations in the underlying assumptions about conferencing as an aspect of supervision to surface.

THE PURPOSE OF THE CONFERENCE

There is general agreement that the conference is an essential part of the supervisory process in that it provides the context within which teacher and supervisor review the events of teaching that have been observed by the supervisor. Perhaps the strongest statement of this viewpoint is offered by Goldhammer's declaration that "All roads lead to the conference." (Goldhammer, 1969, p. 67) Although Cogan describes the conference as a particular phase of the clinical supervision cycle, he goes on to expand the view of the conference saying that it is not the culmination of the supervisory process, but that it is "at one and the same time a constituent and a development of everything that goes on before and after it," and that "All working contacts between teacher and supervisor are 'conference,'" (Cogan, 1973, p. 196). There is also general agreement on the conference's purpose as part of a strategy intended to examine instruction and learning in the teacher's classroom. In summarizing this view,

Sergiovanni and Starratt state that, "The conference is an opportunity and setting for teacher and supervisor to exchange information about what was intended in a given lesson or unit and what actually happened." (Sergiovanni & Starratt, 1983, p. 302)

Beyond these points of agreement, however, are sometimes clearly, but more often subtly differing views on the conference's purpose. Although the conference is generally seen as an occasion for providing the teacher with help in instructional matters, there is much discussion of what are the most effective strategies for delivering that help. On the one hand, the conference is seen as an occasion for teaching. Goldhammer refers to the "didactic component" of clinical supervision which is modeled on teaching analogues (Goldhammer, p. 242). Mosher and Purpel describe the supervisor using evidence from observation as an occasion for "teaching" the teacher alternative, and assumedly more effective, pedagogical strategies. (Mosher and Purpel, 1972, p. 105) More recently, Glickman recognizes the teaching nature of supervision in his discussion of the supervisory option of "directive behaviors" which are appropriately used by the supervisor (particularly with novice teachers) when "there is an assumption that the supervisor has greater knowledge and expertise about the issue at hand" and "knows better than the teacher what needs to be done to improve instruction." (Glickman, 1985, p. 143) While Glickman identifies directive behaviors at one end of a developmental continuum of supervisory strategies, Hunter sees the conference's purpose as inherently pedagogical. She writes:

> The principles of learning that apply to students also apply to teachers. If in the conference the administrator or supervisor uses principles of learning appropriately, a teacher's learning will be increased. (Hunter, 1980)

A number of studies of supervisory conferences have supported the use of directive or teaching behavior in the conference. George Kyte's study described supervisors' positive evaluation of a conference in which the supervisor initiates discussion of two specific observed needs of the teacher. In the absence of supporting evidence, he concludes that the discussion had significant impact on these needs being addressed in subsequent teaching. (Kyte, 1962) McNergney and Francis' comparison of pre- and post-observation conferences found the post-observation conference to be characterized by supervisors "giving information" to teachers. (McNergney & Francis, 1986) A study by McInnes (1968) makes the case that supervisory strategies should emulate effective teaching behavior. Young's (1980) study of principals' post-observation conferencing also reflects this view, and even uses the words "teaching" and "lesson" to describe the nature of the conference. In a study of supervisors' preferences, Gordon (1973) found the teaching behaviors of "advising and informing" the highest category of supervisory behavior reported by the supervisors. Further, the supervisors viewed their own behavior as most effective when it was based in such behavior. Some studies of the perceptions of novice teachers support Gordon's supervisors. These studies have suggested that directive conferencing is also preferred by the novice teachers themselves. (Copeland 1980, Lorsch 1981, Zonca 1973)

While for the most part, the studies discussed above leave wide room for determining what exactly qualify as teaching behaviors, such ambiguity is less the case in those references to the conference serving the teaching-related purpose of providing the teacher with evaluative feedback on her teaching. This, as it were, instinctive evaluative thrust of the post-observation conference was recognized by Weller in the use of his MOSAICS instrument to study patterns of verbal communication in supervisory interactions. (Weller, 1971) Insofar as such evaluation can be presumed to exist against some normative view of effective teaching, it offers the teacher an assessment of her performance on those standards against which she is being judged. The most outstanding example of this perspective in recent literature is that of Hunter who says that evaluation is a function of supervisory conferences, and that in the conference "a teacher's placement on a continuum from 'unsatisfactory' to 'outstanding' will be established and the teacher will have the opportunity to examine the evidence used." (Hunter, 1980) While Hunter sees the conference as an occasion for summative evaluation, Sergiovanni and Starratt express the more common view in the literature, that the conference serves a formative evaluation function:

> The success of the conference depends on the extent to which the process of clinical supervision is viewed as formative, focused evaluation intended to help in understanding and improving professional practice. (Sergiovanni & Starratt, 1983, p. 302)

Yet one other perspective on the conference as an occasion for teaching is found in statements which attribute to the conference

the purpose of training the teacher in the process of analyzing his own teaching, in other words, in the meta-level process of self-supervision. Cogan refers to this as a dual objective of clinical supervision in which the supervisor is responsible for the "didactic introduction (of the teacher) into clinical supervision." (Cogan, p. 216) Goldhammer also refers to the purpose of the conference to train teachers in self-supervision. At a more abstract level, Garman writing of the cycle of supervision as metaphor as well as method, describes the conference as an opportunity for open-ended learning, in which "the notion of the conference not only means two people meeting before and after classroom visits, but also suggests dynamic forms of collaboration in educational alliances." (Garman, 1982, p. 52)

This notion that the conference serves a purpose of equipping teachers with skills of self-supervision is a link between views of the conference as a special case of teaching, and a more expansive view of the conference as an opportunity for the teacher and supervisor to collaboratively or non-directively analyze the data that has been collected in the process of observation. According to this view, the purpose of the conference is a facilitative one in which the supervisor works with and helps the teacher as they both seek to develop a better understanding of how pedagogical decisions affect the nature and quality of instruction and learning. Cogan's charge that the teacher "should understand why he does what he does, and why it is better or worse than other things he might do" (Cogan, p.30) expresses

this view. Focusing on the instrumental role of the supervisor in fostering such understanding, Blumberg says that "The supervisor's objective is to help the teacher make more functional use of his own resources and therefore perform more effectively within the classroom." (Blumberg, 1970) While such conferences may also contain a teaching component, their primary focus is on developing more comprehensive and personal understanding of the teacher's performance than is contained merely in the sum of teaching and learning behaviors.

Several theoretical frames of supervision reflect this view of the conference's purpose. In Glickman's developmental supervision collaborative conferences and non-directive conferences both seek to facilitate the teacher's analysis and understanding of his teaching, and are distinguished only on the basis of the degree of control exercised by the supervisor in helping the teacher identify problems in his teaching and corresponding instructional changes he needs to make. (Glickman, 1985) Other theories seek to describe the nature of the understanding to be sought at levels beyond the observation data. Eisner's notion of artistic supervision describes an approach in which teacher and supervisor "attempt to understand the kind of experience that pupils and teachers have, and not simply describe or count the behaviors they display." (Eisner, 1982, p. 62) Sergiovanni proposes a framework for a theory of supervisory practice that expands supervision beyond classroom observation data to insights into "what ought to be." Such insights would be gained not only from analyzing the events of teaching, but also from a review of

social science, educational and humanities literature and from exploration of the teacher's stated and unstated goals and objectives, and of the educational platform they reflect. (Sergiovanni, 1982) Garman's proposed hierarchy of collegiality at its highest levels also moves beyond the data of classroom observation to attend to the mutual discovery of the meanings and potential of both the supervisor and teacher's professional practice. (Garman, 1982)

A number of studies have examined actual conferencing behavior and have recognized the importance of the conference as an occasion for more open-ended collaborative and non-directive behavior. One such study is Kindsvatter and Wilen's (1981) analysis of conferencing skills which emphasizes the need for supervisors to pose questions that engage teachers in high level thinking skills as they analyze their teaching and develop strategies to improve classroom performance. While, as discussed earlier, a number of studies have found direct conferencing behavior to be preferred by novice teachers, other studies of both novice and experienced teachers have shown teachers' desire for a combination of directive with collaborative and non-directive conferencing behavior. (Desrochers 1982, Newman 1980, Sirois & Gable 1977, Holton 1975, Bryan 1970, Link 1970) This pattern supports Blumberg and Amidon's (1965) landmark study of teachers' perceptions that a supervisor's indirect behaviors of asking and listening combined with direct behaviors of telling and criticizing optimally enabled teachers to gain insight into themselves, both as teachers and as persons. Because these

studies of collaborative and non-directive conferences, as well as the earlier cited studies of directive conferences, for the most part consider only teachers' preferences, no conclusions can be drawn as to the relative effectiveness of particular types of conferences in changing teaching behavior. What the studies of teacher preference do consistently show, however, is teachers' appreciation of conferences that serve multiple directive, collaborative and non-directive purposes.

Before concluding the discussion of the conference's purposes, one final purpose of the supervisory conference intertwined in the literature with views of the conference both as a teaching and as a facilitating process must be considered. This purpose of the conference is to provide psychological reinforcement to the teacher. Despite their generally differing views on the supervisory conference, a number of writers have struck a common chord in describing the kind of support that needs to be given to teachers in the conference. Thus Harris speaks of the value of rewarding "successful elements of performance" (Harris, 1965, p. 351), Goldhammer of the conference as providing "adult rewards" to teachers (Goldhammer, p. 70), Blumberg of the "socio-emotional support" that teachers need to deal with factors affecting their vocational satisfaction (Blumberg, 1980 p. 240), Kindsvatter and Wilen (1981) of the need for praise and sensitivity on the supervisor's part, and Hunter (1981) of the "Type E (for 'excellent') instructional conference" that is based in praise and specific positive reinforcement of excellent teaching behaviors.

The distinction between the kind of support given to teachers from teaching and facilitative perspectives on the conference is in whether such support is directed to the behavior of the teacher or to the teacher as professional person. As such, an essential difference between the teaching and facilitating purposes of supervision surfaces. Insofar as the teaching view is self-limiting in its objectivist assumption that empirically verifiable behaviors are the basis for assessing the effectiveness of instruction and learning, such a view restricts itself to consideration of only those behaviors. On the other hand, the facilitating view casts a wider net, seeking not only to analyze the behaviors themselves, but also to interpret their meanings as choices within a repertoire of possible professional behaviors. Conceived in this way the facilitative purpose of the conference can be considered an example of the constructivist activity Goodman refers to as "world-making." (Goodman, 1984)

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SUPERVISOR AND TEACHER

Cogan used the word "colleagueship" to describe the relationship between supervisor and teacher. The term captures the general tenor of the discussion of that relationship as it has been conducted over the past several decades. However, upon closer examination, distinctions can be uncovered in what is said about the supervisory relationship in the conference, distinctions which reflect differing underlying assumptions about the conference relationship as essentially bureaucratic or collaborative.

Perhaps most obvious are those distinctions which can be found around the issue of who controls the conference. Blumberg's (1980) characterization of relations between supervisors and teachers as "a private cold war," is a dramatic expression of the undercurrent of struggle and dissension over control of the conference. Goldhammer offers a compelling version of how this issue of control operates in the conference. He says, "To open his hand and to make himself deliberately vulnerable is one of Supervisor's principal purposes in the conference. Therein lie the possibilities for justice or at least for evening the psychological score." (Goldhammer, p. 69) While Goldhammer goes on to argue that in response to such vulnerability, the teacher is able to take control of the analysis of his teaching, it is clear that he is able to do so only at the largesse of the supervisor. Control, in Goldhammer's version, is ultimately the supervisor's to share or retain at his own discretion.

Such contrived vulnerability is an example of how a hidden bureaucratic agenda in a conferencing relationship can function to allow the supervisor's manipulation and paternalistic control of the ratio of power within the conference. Mosher and Purpel's claim of relevance for the theory and method of ego-counselling to the process of supervision also maintains for the supervisor as counselor this kind of superior relational position. Yet another example of this phenomenon can be seen in the following statement about the conference:

> In the person to person relationship, the supervisor is better able to stimulate change because the teacher has confidence to experiment when he knows someone is being supportive. (Phipps, 1969, 205)

While the objective of supporting changes in teaching expressed in these examples may be appropriate, there are unsettling implications that the teacher is viewed as an unwitting subject of the supervisor's manipulation.

Control concerns can be seen to underly several studies which have examined specific strategies that supervisors might use to function more effectively in the conference. Among such studies are those proposing that supervisors be trained to incorporate an empathic quality into each of their actions (Graves & Croft, 1976), that supervisors emulate a pattern of beginning all verbal responses to teachers with a positive prefix (Shrigley & Walker, 1981), that supervisors explore the use of fixed and variable conferencing schedules (Saltzman, 1985), and that supervisors utilize a categorized conference analysis system to examine and improve their conferencing behavior (Kridakorn 1983, Kindsvatter & Wilen 1981, Bryan 1970) In each of these studies it is assumed that greater technical proficiency in the conference will afford the supervisor greater control over the process of helping the teacher change her teaching behavior. With the notable exception of Bryan who cautions against the use of his own category system merely at the level of technique and argues that the techniques must be assimilated into the supervisor's own natural style, the studies on conferencing strategies ignore implications of power and control such strategies afford the supervisor.

There is also literature to be found on the other side of the control issue, literature promoting the kind of collaborative

problem solving that Blumberg and Weber (1968) called "engagement." Through such engagement supervision becomes, as Acheson and Gall have put it, "...a dynamic process of give-and-take in which supervisors and teachers are colleagues in search of mutual educational understanding." (Acheson & Gall, 1987) Viewed from this perspective, the conference is seen as a joint venture and the issue of control becomes moot.

Cogan describes a couple of ways in which supervisor and teacher function collaboratively in the supervisory conference. One way is for the teacher to actively prepare for the conference, just as the supervisor does. As Cogan puts it, "The preparation of the teacher for his role in the conference helps to transform him from and object of supervision into a colleague in it." (Cogan, p. 198) Another way is for the supervisor to defer to the teacher at points of impasse over what teaching strategies to use to achieve desired outcomes. Cogan explains his position on the grounds that "It is the teacher who is ultimately responsible for the actual instruction, not the supervisor." (Cogan, p. 220) In such instances the supervisor should help the teacher develop a plan for his teaching and for the collection of appropriate data on the outcomes of his teaching.

Another view of collaboration in the supervisory conference is offered by Foster who holds that the conference represents a unique professional consulting relationship "in which either of the two persons involved has the right to terminate the

consultation at any time." (Foster, 1969, p. 18) More recently Garman has described the need for clinical supervisors to acknowledge the powerful undercurrents of ritualistic conferences and to seek their transformation into collaborative alliances "during which participants learn something about their professional actions." (Garman, 1982) And Smyth has presented clinical supervision as a process of "collaboration and non-evaluative dialogue" through which teachers can gain critical understanding that empowers them to assume greater control of their profession. (Smyth, 1988)

Several studies of the supervisory conference, focused primarily on describing patterns of conferencing behavior, have implicitly endorsed the notion of collaboration in the conference. (Turner-Muecke 1986, Reavis 1977, Sahling 1981, Andrews 1980, Berlin 1974, Zorich 1974) In these studies desirable patterns of interaction between supervisors and teachers were identified, and in each study the patterns described supervisory relationships characterized by genuineness and collaboration between the supervisor and teacher.

As distinctions are made in the literature about the relationship between supervisor and teacher in the supervisory conference around the issue of control, so similar distinctions are made about the issue of responsibility. Questions about the respective responsibilities of the supervisor and the teacher for what takes place in the conference are generally met with an answer similar to Sergiovanni & Starratt's statement that "supervision is a process for which both supervisors and teachers

are responsible." (Sergiovanni & Starratt, p. 299) Distinctions surface, however, upon close consideration of the particular responsibilities various writers assign to supervisors and teachers in the supervisory conference.

Mention is made, for instance, of the supervisor's responsibility for establishing the socio-emotional climate of the conference. (Blumberg 1970, Gordon 1973, Kozisek 1975, Andrews 1980) Acheson and Gall suggest techniques for the supervisor to use in establishing a supportive conference climate. (Acheson & Gall, pp. 171-180) Garman however sees such responsibility equally shared by the teacher, and calls for a relationship between supervisor and teacher characterized by a spirit of "genuine participation." She describes such a relationship as one in which both parties are responsible for seeking agreement and common understanding through the collaborative act of language development. (Garman, p. 45)

Particular skills that supervisors are responsible for demonstrating in the conference are also discussed in the literature. Much of this discussion, as reviewed above, follows Blumberg's lead and centers on describing effective supervisory behavior as a balanced use of directive and non-directive behaviors. Other literature focuses on the skills required of the supervisor in planning the conference, analyzing the observation data, and developing strategies to be used by the teacher to improve his teaching. The supervisor's skillful direction of the conference is generally recognized in the

literature as critically important to the conference's success. As Acheson and Gall have put it: "When things do not go well in a feedback conference, the difficulties can usually be traced to failure on the part of the supervisor to use an effective clinical supervision technique." (Acheson & Gall, p. 168)

Differences of opinion exist however as to exactly how supervisors are to use their skills responsibly in the conference. Take for example Hunter's view that supervisors must be able to "demonstrate conferencing skills that exemplify effective pedagogy." (Hunter 1984, p. 187) For Hunter this means that the supervisor uses a directive approach that reflects the pattern of her seven step lesson sequence. In this case the supervisor is responsible for the selection of data, its analysis, and a prescription for change in the teacher's instruction. The teacher's corresponding responsibility is to implement the supervisor's directions. While other writings have also referred to the supervisor's responsibility for skill in "defining treatable issues," (Goldhammer, p. 69) or "carrying out a full-fledged analysis" (Cogan, p. 206); they do not advocate that the supervisor use the authority of his position in the conference to impose his agenda or analysis on the teacher. Rather, as Cogan describes the process, the skills of the supervisor are in anticipating the teacher's needs and, in the actual interaction of the conference, encouraging the teacher to assume his own share of responsibility for analyzing his teaching behavior and for planning its improvement. (Cogan, p.209)

There is also literature which raises the question of what is an appropriate balance of bureaucratic and collaborative aspects of the relationship between supervisor and teacher. Harris, for instance expresses concern about whether teachers can be expected to have the skills required to assume the kind of responsibility for and control over the analysis and direction of their own teaching expected of them in Cogan and Goldhammer's version of clinical supervision. (Harris, 1976) Denham echoes this concern and calls for research to help determine the extent to which teachers can and should be involved in planning the conference. (Denham, 1977)

A final aspect of responsibility discussed in the literature is that of the supervisor to possess self-knowledge. The supervisor is expected to be aware of the reasons for the choices she makes in planning and participating in the conference, and for how her actions influence a working relationship with the teacher being supervised. The ways in which the supervisor's self-knowledge is described reveal distinctions between a bureaucratic and a collegial view of the supervisory relationship. On the one hand, the supervisor seeks to understand her actions in terms of what they represent as technical strategies for helping the teacher improve his teaching. (Hunter 1984, Desrochers 1982, Gordon 1973, McInnes 1968) Such a view is essentially bureaucratic in that it confers on the supervisor both greater authority and greater responsibility for superior knowledge. On the other hand is Cogan and Goldhammer's collegial view, currently championed by Garman and Smyth, which sees the

supervisor's self-knowledge to include awareness of her own needs and motivations and how these influence the conference.

THE USE OF DATA IN THE CONFERENCE

As might be expected, the literature on the use of observation data in the conference reflects a similar pattern of distinctions to that characterizing views of the conference's purpose and of the relationship between supervisor and teacher. One view of observation data assumes that data can be used to analyze events of teaching and learning in the observed classroom for the purpose of identifying problems in the teacher's instructional strategies. Solutions for these problems are then developed in the course of the conference. Another view sees data being analyzed and used in the conference to provide the supervisor and teacher with descriptive information about the observed events of the classroom. The teacher and supervisor then use this information in a collaborative effort to explore possible interpretations of the events described by the data. These interpretations are not inherent in the data, but rather are created in thoughtful response to the data. It is on these interpretations, which represent a level of abstraction beyond that of the data, that decisions about teaching and learning are based. Although these differing views of data are implicit rather than explicit in the literature, they influence the nature of the discussions about the use of observation data in the conference.

Much of the actual discussion of the use of data in the conference comes from the early years of clinical supervision and

focuses on the work that is done, particularly by the supervisor, to analyze and organize the data into some form that will be useful in the conference and provide focus on what Goldhammer calls the "treatable issues in the teaching." (Goldhammer, p. 70) Mosher and Purpel describe the process as "systematic, disciplined, practical thinking about the wide range of factors which affect the process of formal instruction and its outcomes." (Mosher & Purpel, p. 81) Cogan says of such organizing that it is based on anticipation of the teacher's needs and probable behavior in the conference. (Cogan, p. 206)

There is general agreement among these writers on strategies for organizing the data from classroom observations. Strategies that have been frequently mentioned in the literature are the selection of only a few key elements of teaching or classroom behavior, the organization of the data to illustrate recurring patterns of teacher behavior or classroom occurrences, and the consideration of outstanding or critical incidents. (Harris, Goldhammer, Cogan, Mosher & Purpel) Distinctions about the use of data occur in the literature around the question of what happens once the patterns and critical incidents have been identified. While it is nowhere articulated in the literature, there appears to be a point of view that holds that merely recognizing a pattern in teaching or classroom behavior can lead to change. It would seem that underlying this view is an assumption that the supervisor and teacher hold in common a model of ideal teaching and classroom behavior against which observed behavior can be judged. Certainly this is the case with

the currently outstanding representative of this view, i.e. the Hunter model of supervision.

In contrast to this view is one that involves the supervisor and the teacher in interpretation in which they consider possible meanings of the patterns and incidents identified in the data. This view can be traced to Cogan who said, "The conference is a shared exploration: a search for the meaning of instruction, for choices among alternative diagnoses and for alternative strategies of improvement." (Cogan, p. 197) Recognition of an interpretive aspect of the supervisory conference has been considered more recently by Garman, Eisner and Sergiovanni. Thus Garman refers to supervisors and teachers discovering and inventing modes of reality (Garman, 1982). Eisner says that what is most important in supervision is to use the observation data as a means to determining "what the situation means to the people who are in it and how the actions within the situation convey or create such meaning" (Eisner, p. 62). And Sergiovanni argues for the inclusion of both descriptive and normative dimensions in the practice of supervision (Sergiovanni, 1982).

It is interesting to note that while there has been support in the theoretical literature for the supervisory conference as a process involving mutual interpretation, there appear to be no research studies exploring interpretation as an aspect of the conference. The closest research studies are those which advocate an indirect style of conferencing. (Desrochers 1982, Andrews 1980, Newman 1980, Holton 1975, Bryan 1970, Link

1970) These studies are related only insofar as such indirect behaviors facilitate and encourage interpretation.

Also considered in the literature on the conference is the extent to which the supervisor plans the presentation of the findings of his data analysis for presentation in the conference. It is easy to see that the way in which conferences based on views such as Hunter's make use data to assess the teacher's classroom performance against pre-determined standards of effective teaching would allow the supervisor to prepare and deliver a highly structured review of the observation. Evaluation of the teacher's performance is easily incorporated into this type of conference. However, the view that the supervisor should not rigidly structure the conference is more widely expressed in the literature. Thus Cogan cautioned that the course of the conference is unpredictable. According to Cogan, while the supervisor should prepare for the conference, he should not pre-plan its course because he cannot predict with high enough certainty what issues and agenda the teacher will bring to the conference. (Cogan, p. 197) Sergiovanni and Starratt echo this position as they suggest that "supervisors prepare for the conference by setting tentative objectives and planning tentative processes, but in a manner that does not program the course of the conference too much." (Sergiovanni & Starratt, p. 301)

A final point about the use of data that emerges in the literature is that attention be paid in the conference to data which illustrate the teacher's pedagogical strengths. According

to Harris it is easier for the teacher and supervisor to build forward from these strengths and his own successful teaching performance provides a model for the teacher to follow. (Harris, p. 351) Cogan and Goldhammer also encourage supervisors to focus their efforts on enhancing teachers' strengths, with Cogan making the point that such an approach well serves the teacher's needs and interests. (Cogan, p. 204)

CONCLUSION

As the literature on the supervisory conference is examined, it becomes clear that assumptions, and the distinctions within those assumptions, about the supervisory conference have remained quite consistent over the past thirty years. It also becomes clear that these assumptions were, for the most part, shaped by an emerging model of clinical supervision.

While the supervisory conference has remained an unquestioned convention of supervisory practice during the past three decades, renewed interest in examining the conference is surfacing. In recent years, for instance, the supervisory conference has been the subject of papers presented at AERA by Glickman (1983), Grimmett (1983, 1984,1985), Pajak (1984), and Smyth (1981). There is reason, however, to question the availability of access--particularly for the practitioners of supervision--to such conference papers as opposed to the texts, published articles, and dissertations (at least in abstract form) that have been reviewed in this study. Awaiting publication of the work contained in these papers, the supervisory conference will

continue to be based in theory and research that bears reexamination and extension.

Perhaps a more important focus than chronology for conclusions about the literature on conferencing is on the relative balance of theory versus solid research studies on the conference. It is both a tribute to Blumberg and Weller an embarrassment to the field of supervision that their research from the 1960's still offers the best available methods for data collection on the supervisory conference. Much research begs to be done on the supervisory conference. For instance, the use of qualitative methods and of techniques of discourse analysis to explore the interpretive aspects of the supervisory conference offer the potential for new understanding of a dimension of conferencing often cited in the theoretical literature. The assumptions examined in this study may suggest an agenda for other such research.

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